

Minutes of the Planning Commission Regular Meeting of Tuesday August 15, 2017
Council Chambers, One Twin Pines Lane, Belmont, CA

ROLL CALL 7:00 P.M.

Planning Commissioners Present: Simpson, Meola, Mates, McCune, Hendrix

Planning Commissioners Absent: Majeski, Goldfarb

Staff Present: Community Development Director de Melo, City Attorney Rennie, Senior Planner Gill, Assistant Planner Dietz, Temporary Administrative Assistant Hernandez.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Chair Mates.

COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments)

No requests to speak received.

COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS / AGENDA AMENDMENTS

City Council Meeting of August 22, 2017 - Commission Liaison is Commission Chair Mates, Alternate: Commissioner Goldfarb. Chair Mates stated that she will be attending.

CONSENT CALENDAR

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

554 El Camino Real. The applicant requests approval of Conditional Use Permit and Design Review applications to remove and replace three antennas, relocate other existing antennas, and add wireless telecommunication equipment for the facade/roof and equipment shelter. (Appl. No. PA2017-0035) APN: 044-201-070.

Commissioner Mates polled the Commission for ex-parte communication regarding the project; Commissioners indicated that site visits were made but no ex-parte communications were made.

Senior Planner Gill summarized the staff report, outlined the project and stated that three existing antennas, one in each of the three antenna sectors, will be replaced with three panel antennas. Senior Planner Gill stated that this project is in accordance with Section 6409 of the Middle-Class Tax Relief Act of 2012; the act establishes new requirements for the permitting of modifications, colocation and removal of existing wireless telecommunications towers and base stations.

Senior Planner Gill recommended approval of the Conditional Use Permit and Design Review applications.

Commissioners had no questions regarding the project, stating that the application was routine in nature and that they could support the findings.

John T. Merritt, applicant had no further information to add.

Chair Mates opened the Public Hearing, no one came forward to speak.

Chair Mates closed the Public Hearing.

Commission deliberation on the item yielded project support.

ACTION: On a Motion by Commissioner Simpson, Seconded by Commissioner Meola Approving a Conditional Use Permit and Design Review to allow modification to an existing AT&T wireless communication facility at 554 El Camino Real Appl. No. PA2017-0035.

Passed 5/0/2 (Majeski and Goldfarb absent)
Resolution 2017-26

Chair Mates stated that the action is appealable within 10 calendar days.

2820 Ponce Avenue (Serendipity School) – The applicant requests a Grading Permit to grade 1,498 total cubic yards of soil. In addition, the applicant requests a Tree Removal Permit for the removal of 21 protected trees. The project’s Design Review and Conditional Use Permit to amend the existing site utilization plan were recommended for City Council Approval at the July 18 Planning Commission meeting. (Appl. No. PA2017-0019) APN: 043-290-620.

Chair Mates polled the Commission for ex-parte communication regarding the project; Commissioners indicated that site visits were made but no ex-parte communications were made.

Commissioner Hendrix recused himself from the hearing based on a proximity conflict and stepped off the dais and exited the chambers.

Assistant Planner Dietz gave a general overview of the project, and outlined the staff report.

Assistant Planner Dietz explained that the City adopted a new Tree Ordinance, which became effective August 11, 2017 and even though the project application was before that date, the new Tree Ordinance is more appropriate to apply to this project.

The applicant proposes 1,498 cubic yards of cut, with an estimated 39,640 sq. feet of surface area that would be altered by grading. The Conditions of Approval require a Hauling Permit and a Construction Management Plan, which include noticing the surrounding properties two weeks prior to grading operations, that grading must be timed to avoid peak school and work commute hours and requiring the grading to avoid diverting runoff to other properties.

The applicant had originally proposed to remove 31 trees, with some replanting on-site and some off-site. The proposal has been revised for multiple reasons including feedback from the July 18, 2017 meeting and safety concerns. Fifty-three (53) preferred species trees will be planted, entirely

on-site, which is well beyond the mitigation planting requirement, and would maintain and expand the buffer between the school and the surrounding properties.

One Condition of Approval was added, which requires the applicant to obtain a Hauling Permit prior to issuance of a Grading Permit.

Discussion ensued regarding the Conditions of Approval, Exhibit A, which shows 21 trees being replanted. Assistant Planner Dietz stated that the correct number is 53 trees being replanted.

Seamus O'Connor, BCA Architects stated that he represents the Carr family, owners and operators of Serendipity school. He stated the reason some of the changes were made were due to community comments as well as Planning Commission comments. Safety was a main concern with eliminating the eucalyptus trees on site, since there have been issues with branches falling. The on-site planting exceeds the buffer around the school site to provide more privacy to the neighbors and the school.

Commissioners questioned why other evergreen trees were not being planted.

Robin Kim, RHAA Landscape Architects stated that in the planting plan there are Oak, Sycamore and Redwood trees being planted to continue the buffer zone. The school also wanted a balanced ecosystem. The trees being planted will mark the seasonal change of time.

The applicants did not have an issue with Exhibit A, the Conditions of Approval being changed to show 53 trees being planted and not 21.

Chair Mates opened the Public Hearing, no one came forward to speak.

Chair Mates closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioners indicated they could make findings with the changes to Exhibit A, which should show 53 trees planted and not 21 trees.

ACTION: On a Motion by Commissioner McCune, Seconded by Commissioner Simpson Approving a Grading Permit and a Tree Removal Permit at 2820 Ponce Avenue. (Appl. No. PA2017-0019), with the change to the Conditions of Approval indicating 53 trees being planted and not 21.

Passed 4/1/2 (Hendrix recused, Majeski absent, Goldfarb absent)
Resolution 2017-27

Chair Mates stated that action is appealable within 10 calendar days.

Meeting Recess 7:25

Meeting Resumes at 7:30 with Commissioner Hendrix back on the dais.

OTHER BUSINESS / UPDATES

Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) – 2035 General Plan & Interim Zoning, Belmont Village Specific Plan & Zoning, Climate Action Plan.

City Attorney Rennie stated that this is purely a legislative matter.

Community Development Director deMelo stated that various components of the project have been before the Commission; this project has been reviewed and evaluated for a number of years. The comprehensive project covers the General Plan, the Belmont Village Specific Plan and the Climate Action Plan and some associated policy plans as well as the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). Tonight, serves as an opportunity for the community to provide verbal comments before the public comment period ends on August 18, 2017.

Sophie Martin, Dyett & Bhatia, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the 2035 Belmont General Plan Update, Belmont Village Specific Plan, Phase 1 Zoning Code Update, and Climate Action Plan. She stated that the last day to submit comments to Mr. deMelo, the Community Development Director is Friday August 18, 2017. This is a perfect opportunity for the public, agencies, and the Planning Commission to provide comments.

She strongly encourages that comments should be sent in writing so that the consultants can fully understand what is being said and that we are able to respond to them. Comments can be provided on-line, US Mail or at the General Plan and Belmont Village Specific Plan URL.

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA provides Disclosure, Analysis, Mitigation and Reasonable Alternatives.

The Belmont General Plan, Belmont Village Specific Plan and Climate Action Plan Draft EIR is a Programmatic EIR: *“A general environmental assessment for an overall program of projects intended to be developed over a long-term planning horizon.”* This is looking at the city and does not get into the same level of specificity that a project does.

There are four potential Environmental Impact Findings:

1. No Impact.
2. Less than Significant.
3. Less than Significant with Mitigation.
4. Significant and Unavoidable.

The Significant, Unavoidable Impacts were:

1. Air Quality due to construction-related emissions, long-term operational emissions and exposing sensitive receptors to pollutants.
2. Noise due to exposure to short-term construction noise and vibration, and long-term traffic noise.

3. Transportation due to intersection and roadway Level of Service/delay. Going forward CEQA will have Vehicle Miles Traveled as the metric and not Level of Service.

City Attorney Rennie stated that Vehicles Miles Traveled is a state driven regulatory change and not a city choice.

The Alternatives to the Proposed Project:

1. No Project Alternative (1982 General Plan and the 1990/1995 Downtown Specific Plan and No Climate Action Plan, which does not equal no growth or no development; rather represents current planning documents remaining in place.
2. Alternative 1, Balanced Mixed Use, which is designed to potentially mitigate various significant impacts of the Proposed Project by creating a more balanced relationship between housing and commercial development in certain areas.

In September 2017, the city will release the Final EIR, which will contain responses to comments, edits and revisions to the Draft EIR. In the final months of 2017, the Planning Commission and the City Council will hold adoption hearings.

Community Development Director deMelo stated that no decisions are to be made tonight. Tonight's meeting is about listening and hearing comments from the public and the Planning Commission. Next week, the city will start looking at the comments received from the public. We have prepared five (5) policy documents as well as the DEIR.

Kevin Burke, small business owner and renter here in Belmont, like 42% of Belmont residents who rent in the city, I'm trying to save up to buy a home. As you may be aware the high price of rent is a really big area of concern for renters and the business community. Statewide more than 1 of 3 renters pay more than half their salary in rent. My girlfriend and I are going to pay \$40,000 this year on rent here in Belmont. Many renters may be scared to speak out, I spoke to 2 people in the last week who are afraid of giving a public comment for fear of retaliation from their landlord.

Since 2010, San Mateo County has added seventy-five thousand jobs and only four thousand new housing units; that's increased competition for San Mateo apartments, in the same time frame the average rent has gone from \$1,600 per month to \$3,100 per month. The new plan calls for Belmont to add thirty-three hundred jobs and only fifteen hundred new housing units, that would be fine except every peninsula community is and has continued to add more jobs than housing. San Francisco in that same time frame has added ninety-eight thousand jobs and seventeen thousand housing units, Santa Clara county has added a hundred and fifty-seven thousand new jobs and only thirty thousand housing units since 2010. It's not really clear where the extra people are going to live and commute from.

The fastest growing towns in the bay area are places like Gilroy, Morgan Hill, Brentwood and Dublin, mostly single-family homes with lawns. It's not good for the environment and it's not good for traffic when those people are commuting long distances to get to their jobs and I think the plan as currently written would exasperate that by adding many more jobs than housing units and it also puts stress on rent for apartments here in Belmont. To echo what the presenter said about Level of Service, Level of Service prioritizes a 20-minute commute on an empty freeway over a five-minute commute on a congested road; it has to do with how fast you can get around

the roads and kind of prioritizes that commute from far out in Gilroy compared to infill development, which is why the state is switching away from it. I think if we did consider the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) it would be much more favorable to housing here in Belmont. I would also say that there is a contradiction in the heart of any EIR, which is, people are an environmental impact we use water, electricity, we drive cars, from that respective of course adding more people is gonna have an impact on the environment. I think a better question is what is the impact of adding an extra person here versus adding an extra person say in Gilroy in which the EIR doesn't really address and is not legally required to address. I think there is a good argument to have less of an impact here in Belmont.

I'd like you to consider Alternative 1 please. The unemployment rate in San Mateo County is about 2% and it's not clear we need more room for office space. Literally every month someone I know is leaving the Bay Area because of the high cost of housing. My brother and my sister have already left. I'd like you to consider Alternative 1 in the plan which would add twenty-four hundred housing units; I think three hundred of those would be affordable and 2,100 jobs. I think this would be much better for traffic, for the environment and for the community as a whole. Thank you.

Jo Ann Arneson, Belmont Resident, spoke and stated she preferred Alternative 1. I think it's very important to have a balance of jobs and housing. In order to have a thriving, vibrant community, I think we want people to not only work here but live here and contribute to the community and I'm not in favor of people commuting and polluting. Thank you.

Sam Van, Belmont Resident, I'm here because I've lived in Belmont for the past thirty years. I'm a single mother with two kids and my rent has doubled in four years. So, adding more businesses and less housing is going to drive rents even higher and for that we need more housing and more affordable housing for the people that live in Belmont should be the first to get first dibs. Thank you.

Sarah Feldman, Belmont Resident, wanted to echo what Kevin and JoAnn spoke about earlier, jobs/housing balance. I think it's incredibly important but I think we are leaving out a third category which is really relevant, which is recreation. As we are adding more people to the city it's important that they also have places to go to recreate. The City of Belmont, at the moment is actually below their goal for recreation even from what the EIR says, it says "While Belmont currently falls short of achieving its developed parkland standard, the city has many acres of open space and miles of trails". But I encourage you to think about how many kids can recreate in a safe and supervised manor on a hiking trail. In the Environmental Impact Report, there is an assessment of recreation and traffic and community impact of the Belmont Village Specific Plan, in the recreation section, with public services there is a reference to a community gathering space but a community gathering space is not the same as the recreational asset that Belmont lost over a year ago, which is an ice rink. Although it did similarly gather a general, you know culture that was community based that exists at a rink, this community gathering space is not necessarily a recreational facility, it could be a place where people go to drink beer, it could be anything that is non-recreational, so I encourage a little more specificity in that language.

Within the historical resources inventory I also encourage you to add Belmont Iceland because it had been here for 60 years and it was the training ground for Olympian Brian Boitano.

Without recreational replacement for Belmont's ice rink, the plan falls short for fixing the commute problems that are now inherent in every Belmont skaters weekly recreation to San Francisco, San Jose and Dublin. Hockey parents used to spend over a \$1,000 a week in Belmont which they are now taking to other cities.

Overall the EIR is not substantial, as it does not thoroughly address the traffic and recreation problem which is causing longer commutes for formal Belmont Iceland skaters, but I do hope that the city considers these thoughts and does everything in its power to reopen the rink. Thank you.

Annette Garcia, Belmont Resident. Thank you, Planning Commission, for your time. I am also here to discuss the recreation aspect of it and request that the Planning Commission consider that one of the things that made Belmont really special and unique as a community over the last 60 years was having skating and hockey and a gem of Belmont Iceland and I know you've heard this, we talked about it many times but I'm here because we don't want you to forget.

I know recreation is an important part of planning a city, yes, we are talking about having more development for more places for people to live and also being equal with the amount of jobs being here but, if you don't have recreation for people of all ages you have unhappy people.

Diverse recreation is really important, not all children are basketball, baseball or soccer players. There are children; I had a child today; I'm a figure skating coach and he currently has ADD and he got out there on the ice and his grandmother said you know he said "I want to do this forever" and there is nothing else that makes him as happy, nothing else that he can go out there and just skate around for an hour and really enjoy, he's tried everything else so I think having diverse options for children here in this community will make it a more rich and diverse community. Again, it's important to the children in surrounding communities who also came here so Belmont children weren't the only children who benefited from here.

I grew up in Redwood City, but I started my skating here in Belmont and trained under a coach here and I spent almost every day at the rink, so it's not just Belmont, it's the surrounding communities in San Mateo County, so I ask that you also please consider diverse recreation for Belmont and that includes other children from San Mateo County that will use your facilities. Thank you.

Tori Park, Belmont Resident. I also want to bring up the fact that recreation is really important. I just moved to Belmont a few months ago and I've spent my entire childhood in Belmont. Before that I used to live in Woodside and I would come to the rink every day and spend several hours a day skating, going out with friends and then bringing business to Belmont, so I think it's really important that we do have that recreation, but that we also take into account for the residents that are already here and not overbuild and not overdevelop without giving people options of things to do. I live right by Waterdog Lake Park and I adore being by a trail but I also kind of hate that there are not as many options for going to the gym; or going and skating, I have to go to Redwood City to do it or while I'm at work I have to go to Yerba Buena or on the weekends I tend to go to Dublin as well if I can't find the ice time to teach my kids. I have tons of parents that can't be here because they have kids who have school starting tomorrow and out of about 10 kids that I had before the rink closed I've lost 50% of them because they can't make the commute anymore and

they all regret the fact that there is not as much ability for kids to go from school to a place that is easy for them to make friends and foster relationships that they keep forever.

Mohammad Mohi-Uddin, I am representing my client he owns four lots in Belmont on Ralston Avenue, so I'm here to give some relief to Kevin to build some houses; but when the Ralston Avenue was wide enough they put a retaining wall so we don't have any access so we need to know from where do we get the access for those lots. I'm trying to sell this for the past six months, there is no access so Belmont Canyon Road south, these lots are between what do you call it the traffic light by 92 and Belmont Canyon Road south. The water company says that to remove those pipes that are passing through the lots as an easement is a four hundred thousand dollar to five hundred-thousand-dollar expense or go through Ralston Avenue. But the city has closed that and put a retaining wall so either move the sand or let us build some houses. We can easily make four houses there and if the zoning changes we can make eight houses if allowed so that is our request. So, what do we do, what is the exit from Ralston Avenue so we need access that is the problem, we are not having access to those lots and the City of Belmont says that there is a road there already that goes to lot number four. I have the lot maps and to remove those pipes that go underneath those lots that's another heavy expense to develop. Thank you.

Diane Bailey, a resident of the city's Sterling Downs neighborhood. I really want to compliment the City. I think it's a monumental feat to pull together this many plans and documents in one shot with one EIR and I really appreciate the task at hand. I have numerous comments that I will share with you in writing but I just wanted to summarize. I strongly support this plan and I'm really happy to see the City of Belmont move forward with this project and bring Belmont a downtown. Right now, it's just a large Safeway parking lot and you know a lot of our friends and neighbors go out to other cities when they do recreation or evenings out with their families and so I know we would all love to stay here more if there was more of a downtown in a kind of a there there to Belmont so it's very exciting to see this happen.

I want to echo some of the comments about jobs/housing balance. This is a really pressing issue throughout the Bay Area, the cost of living is driving a lot of people out and it's painful for us to watch our friends and neighbors leave because of the cost of living. I know that the onus can't be the burden of a small town like Belmont but we would like to see more density downtown and I think this plan is a great start but I wonder if the city could consider in certain circumstances higher floor area ratio limits, and building up more stories to allow greater density on the mixed-use developments envisioned in the downtown plan just to have more housing and more affordable housing especially on top of the retail. A lot of local cities have done this successfully. I'm thinking of Redwood City but San Mateo as well and so I know folks are really concerned about too much density. Don't change Belmont too much but we need to do our part to elevate the housing crunch and I think the downtown area Belmont Village Specific Plan is the perfect place for that density. I have a bunch of environmental standards that I would also like to be considered and I will put those in writing but I will also point out that I work on these things for a living. I focus my efforts in Menlo Park. The City of Menlo Park recently went through its own General Planning process and that was completed late last year and they came up with very green building standard development standards. It really doesn't cost developers more money, it just requires more thoughtful and careful planning and so we really encourage this commission and city to look at those standards. We've sent our sustainability guides in our email comments before and I will send

them again as a reminder. We have a green building standards fact sheet that is just two pages that summarizes what was done in Menlo Park and we draw on examples from throughout the region and beyond and so Belmont doesn't need to reinvent the wheel. We can build in renewable energy and clean building and zero carbon building standards into this plan without too much effort, it just draws on existing samples.

In terms of sustainable transportation, great TDM list, I love what you are doing with the parking, making a more people centric downtown instead of car centric. I will put the rest in writing. Thank you so much.

Alan Sarver, Belmont Resident. I didn't prepare anything to say, I came here to listen this evening as well and I just wanted to support the points that Diane just made and focus on a good living/housing and employment balance in the work that we do. I really think that a multi-level, multi-use density along the transportation corridor is the way that we accomplish the long-range goals we have moving forward. I'm very pleased to hear her comments about standards that have been worked on and developed to really get everything in place and ensure that we move strongly in that direction. I've had the chance to be involved in a lot of the meetings that led to the plan being developed and I think the community has been heard very well in building this up. I just do hope that our focus is very much on Belmont taking its place as part of the fabric of the solution emerging along the peninsula. We can't do more than our own share of a small town but we want to do everything that we can to be an effective part of the solution. Thank you very much for this great work.

Mary Morrissey Parden, Board Member of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce. We have certainly been following all three of these plans and we highly support the direction its taking. I'm here primarily to listen, but I did want to follow up on one of the comments the speaker made about development standards. I think this plan had some intention of not having really tight development standards so we weren't going to get something cookie cutter like the last or the current Downtown Specific Plan. You can see it's a pretty cookie cutter look and that was done with intent and purpose and I think loosening up development standards helps developers bring in projects that have a broader range to you. I know we will talk further about this, but I just wanted to follow up on the speaker prior to last. Thank you.

Community Development Director deMelo stated that we heard from folks from the audience that wish to address the Commission and we would not be responding to comments tonight and that the meeting was video recorded and that we would be working with Dyett & Bhatia after the comment period closes on August 18, 2017. We will be coming up with a schedule for public hearing review, and adoption of the documents and release of the Final EIR.

Community Development Director deMelo stated that September through December will be busy months, as we are reviewing this large-scale project. He recommended to the commissioners that they drive around the community and see the progress of all the development projects that are happening. The first hotel, the Marriott should be ready to open in about a month; Crystal Springs Upland School is approaching their completion and will be holding a ribbon cutting event at the end of this month, on August 27th; the two mixed use projects along El Camino Real are in the process of framing; and Autobahn has given us some revised updates on their anticipated date of

completion and that is February of next year. There is a new gas station being built at Old County Road and Ralston Avenue, which is going to be a 76 Station with some additional pumps, a mini mart building and a car wash. We also have lots of projects including single family homes coming before this Commission in the next few months.

City Attorney Rennie stated that there could possibly be another process training opportunity for the Commissioners. He is currently working on some ideas, more in-depth discussion on the Brown Act, Ex-parte contact or other aspects about being a Commissioner. Commissioners can send him ideas offline, and training will be conducted in an informal setting.

ADJOURNMENT: to a regular meeting of the Planning Commission to be held on September 5, 2017, at this time being 8:35 P.M.

Prepared by,
Irma Hernandez
Temporary Administrative Assistant

Approved by,
Carlos deMelo, Community Development
Director

Meeting televised and web streamed.